

THE AMBASSADOR'S SPECIAL SELF-HELP FUND

UNITED STATES EMBASSY KINSHASA

INFORMATION ABOUT THE AMBASSADOR'S SPECIAL SELF-HELP FUND



Figure 1 Community of Kilo in Kabinda appreciates the gift of clean water. (State Dept. Images)

The Ambassador's Self-Help Fund (SSHF) provides small grants to registered self-help groups, community based organizations, and certain educational institutions and medical facilities. The objective is to aid groups in the development of projects that improve living conditions in their communities. The funds do not support the creation of a project or activity, but rather the expansion of existing community projects. SSHF do not support request from individuals or for individual profit.

TYPES OF PROJECTS FUNDED

- Congolese with special needs. The Ambassador's SSHF Funds support projects that aid populations which are vulnerable or at-risk. We consider projects that improve the lives and living conditions of the disabled, orphans and vulnerable children.
- Water. The Ambassador's SSHF may support community water projects that bring clean, safe drinking water to a large number of people. The submission of a professionally prepared design report is required.
- Educational. Requests from reputable schools for activities or materials which improve the educational quality provided for Congolese students are considered.
- Medical equipment. Requests for appropriate medical -equipment from community-initiated clinics or dispensaries that are operating professionally, are considered.
- Income-generating activities. The Ambassador's SSHF Fund may consider support for an innovative or unique income-generating activity in the community. The activity must provide a benefit for the community-at-large. The group must show that it has appropriate training and or knowledge to carry out the activity, and it must have a clear understanding of the market for its product or service.

TYPES OF PROJECTS REJECTED

- Purchase of rental of land or buildings
- Administrative, recurrent, or operational costs
- Revolving loans or "start-up" capital
- Fees or salaries, including those for training, seminars, travel costs, or per diem

- Religious, cultural, or recreational activities
- Meetings, training, information campaigns
- Office furniture, equipment, or supplies
- Uniforms, school fees, and sports equipment
- Any chemical, including fertilizer, pesticides, fungicides, or herbicides
- Small implements that are easily broken, stolen or privatized
- Support to businesses, private or individual enterprises

APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESS

Projects selected for funding must be completed and serve the community within one year. Selected project must have strong community involvement with a substantial community benefit that is self-sustaining and ongoing. The average amount awarded to an organization is between \$2,000 and \$10,000.

The Ambassador's SSH Fund receives many applications each year. To be considered, carefully prepare the application form and include all the required information.

- A complete application form in English and French
- Thorough project description
- Additional information to explain proposal, such as design report, blueprints, building plans, specifications of equipment, photos, drawings, etc.
- Project budget, including self-help contributions and items for which financial support is requested
- Pro-Forma invoices for whatever the grant funds would purchase, including professional services

Grants are usually awarded between July and September of each year. Selected grantees sign a legally binding agreement with the United States Government.

Site visits are often conducted before a project is selected. Following the site visit, a committee made up of the U.S. Ambassador and other U.S. Mission employees make a final decision based on the information acquired. Awards not accepted, receive a brief email explanation as to why their request was not funded.

COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION

The applicant or benefiting community should contribute 25% or more towards the total cost of the project. Community contributions can consist of labor, materials, cash, unskilled labor, transportation or a combination of these items.

APPLYING FOR THE AMBASSADOR'S SPECIAL SELF-HELP FUND

The Ambassador's SSH Office is located at US Embassy Kinshasa, and applications are accepted on a rolling-basis. Please send your requests to:

Ambassador's Special Self-Help Fund
United States Embassy Kinshasa
310 Avenue des Aviateurs,
Kinshasa/Gombe, Rep. Democratique du Congo
Telephone 243 81 225 5872 ext. 2144